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The *Lunyu*, a Homeless Dog in Intellectual History

On the dating of discourses on Confucius' knowledge and on his success

Joachim Gentz (Edinburgh)

Introduction

One of the main reasons to refer to the *Lunyu* in academic discourses is to reconstruct early Confucian thought. The *Lunyu* is obviously one of the major sources to construct early Chinese intellectual history. Confucius is by many intellectual historians regarded as "the first known ideologically active member of the *shi* stratum,"[1] or even as "the most influential thinker in Chinese civilization and the first whose philosophy can be reconstructed to any significant degree,"[2] and Confucianism accordingly as "the earliest of the competing tendencies in the thought of ancient China,"[3] and "China's oldest and most revered philosophy."[4] Using the *Lunyu* as a source in intellectual history means to assume that the *Lunyu* is part of an early intellectual discourse and even an important reference point for the beginning of Chinese philosophy. This assumption has been called into question as the dating of the *Lunyu* has become increasingly controversial. In an article that summarises some of the main arguments of this controversy Csikzentmihalyi and Kim conclude that in the light of recent archaeological finds "the *Analects* changes from a text about Confucius to a text that preserves the early textual practices of generations of writers that may include Confucius." "It is hardly a reflection of Confucius's life and times, but instead represents a complex space occupied by a number of people who claimed to be his spiritual or ethical followers—people who possessed divergent, contrasting, and continually retouched portraits of him."[5]

To critically reflect the practice of taking the *Lunyu* as a source for constructing intellectual history this paper will follow a hypothesis that reverses this relationship: if the *Lunyu* can be taken as a source for intellectual history then in turn intellectuall history can be taken to date the *Lunyu*. This chapter will thus ask what happens if we continue to follow the general

[1] Pines 2012: 78.
[2] Goldin 2011: 7.
[3] Graham 1989: 31.
[4] Goldin 2011: 1.
[5] Csikzentmihalyi and Kim 2014: 163-164.

assumption of the *Lunyu* as an intellectual locus and try to locate it in intellectual history. It will discuss the methodological requirements and test the potential and limits of such an approach when applying it to the *Lunyu*.

In order to use intellectual history to date texts we need to assume that any intellectual activity is confined to particular historical contexts. We then need to make a number of further assumptions:

First, intellectual history comprises the following elements: concepts, ideas, thoughts, discourses or problems and respective terms and/or metaphors. According to our analytical focus we then do "history of concepts," "history of ideas," "history of thoughts," "history of discourses," "history of problems," "history of terms," or "history of metaphors."

Second, these elements change over time.

Third, the changes or shifts can be dated so that a history of these elements can be constructed.

Fourth, despite their historical changes something of the elements remains identical that allows us to speak of a historical continuity of the same element X and enables us to write a "history of X." In a "history of terms," for example, despite all historical changes in meaning the terms remain the same. As the identical aspects of the elements of intellectual history primarily relate to the contents of these elements I will refer to these aspects as *topoi*.

These are the methodological assumptions. We also need to make sure that the text that is to be dated fulfills a number of basic criteria. First, it obviously needs to contain elements of intellectual history (see above). Second, these elements need to be identifiable on two levels: first, the continuous and identical part that makes it identifiable as an *element* X, second, the feature of change that makes it datable in a *history of* X.

The *Lunyu* is obviously full of concepts, ideas, thoughts, discourses or problems and respective terms and metaphors that meet the first criterion of a text that contains elements of intellectual history. Yet, we hardly find any argumentation or discursive exposition of these elements. All we find are short authoritative statements of the Master, evaluations and definitions that are not even consistent throughout the book. The purpose of the book is obviously not to take part in, or contribute to, an intellectual debate.

The following example will illustrate this. Historians of Chinese thought consider benevolence or humanity (*ren* 仁) as one of the central ideas of Confucius. To explain the

meaning of it, they often cite a selection of *Lunyu* passages in which this word is defined to then provide their own interpretation of the term.[6] I would like to proceed similarly and present a few passages on *ren* to demonstrate in turn that the *Lunyu* material does not allow such an approach. I will just pick a handful of the first meaningful passages on *ren* in the *Lunyu*.

> 1.2 有子曰：「其為人也孝弟，而好犯上者，鮮矣；不好犯上，而好作亂者，未之有也。君子務本，本立而道生。孝弟也者，其為仁之本與！」
> Youzi said: "There are very few who in their actions are filial towards their parents and respectful towards their elder sisters and yet like to offend their superiors. That someone who doesn't like to offend his superiors would be fond of creating disorder has never happened. The gentleman regards the roots of things as fundamental. When the right root is established then the right way grows out of it. Filial piety and respect towards elders, isn't this the root of *ren*?

Let us reconstruct the line of thought here: filial and respectful people rarely offend their superiors and thus rarely cause disorder. This attitude is the basis of *ren*. *Ren* in this passage is therefore presented as a spirit of respect and obedience to superiors.

> 1.3 子曰：「巧言令色，鮮矣仁！」
> The Master said: "Skillful speech and insinuating appearance rarely goes together with *ren*."[7]

Here, *ren* is opposed to artificial performance, so it means something like genuineness. It is unclear how this goes together with a spirit of obedience.

> 4.2 「不仁者不可以久處約，不可以長處樂。仁者安仁，知者利仁。」
> Those who are not *ren* cannot endure hardship for long and cannot enjoy pleasure for long. Those who are *ren* are at home in *ren*, those who are wise benefit from *ren*."

In this passage *ren* is defined as something that is independent from outer circumstances such as hardship and pleasure. It can be positively used by wise people. This aspect of *ren* can be related (by the reader of the *Lunyu*) to the two aspects defined above, especially the genuineness. Such a relation, however, is not established by the text.

> 4.3 子曰：「唯仁者能好人，能惡人。」
> The Master said: "Only those who are *ren* are able to like people and to detest people."

Ren is here related to the fair emotional judgment of others. The passage does not give any reason why only those who possess *ren* can judge others, but it seems that *ren* means

[6] See as a prominent example Feng Youlan, 69-73.
[7] The same saying: "巧言令色，未可謂仁也" can be found in the *Dizi wen* 2005: 274 (strip 11).

something like impartiality here, detachedness, neutrality, fair-mindedness, being unbiased and the like.

> 4.4 子曰：「苟志於仁矣，無惡也。」
> The Master said: "If your attention is directed to *ren*, then there is no wickedness."

Again, *ren* is related to 惡, and this might be the reason why these two passages are put together here. Yet, the character 惡 (pronounced "*e*" and not "*wu*" as in the preceding passage 4.3) has a different meaning here. *Ren* means something like goodness (as opposed to wickedness) here. It does not easily connect to 4.3 as goodness is not the same as impartiality, neither is it a sufficient condition for impartiality.

> 4.5 子曰：「富與貴是人之所欲也，不以其道得之，不處也；貧與賤是人之所惡也，不以其道得之，不去也。君子去仁，惡乎成名？君子無終食之間違仁，造次必於是，顛沛必於是。」
> The Master said: "Wealth and social status is what people desire. Yet, one shouldn't settle in it if this cannot be achieved by means of the right way. Poverty and low status is what people despise. Yet, one should not do away with it if this cannot be achieved by means of the right way. If a gentleman gives up *ren*, wherefrom could he accomplish a name? A gentleman will not even for the time of finishing a meal turn against *ren*, because getting into unfavorable situations and falling into difficulties will certainly result from this."

In contrast to possibilities to gain wealth and social status by improper means, *ren* is introduced in this passage as a true means to establish a name. This seems to contradict other passages like 1.3 where *ren* is dissociated from attempts to please others or 4.2 where *ren* is exactly the means to be independent from outer circumstances (to which something like name and fame could be counted as well). The absence of *ren* is then in a further and entirely unconnected last sentence associated to getting into unfavorable situations and fall into difficulties. *Ren* thus is a sense of keeping out of trouble and turn situations into favorable circumstances. This reminds to the wise in 4.2 who know to use *ren* for their benefit, and name and fame might be part of this.

Looking at this sample of the first relevant passages on *ren* in the *Lunyu*, it is quite obvious that this is an assemblage of unrelated and quite miscellaneous predications about *ren*. *Ren* is presented as a spirit of respect and obedience, genuineness, independence from outer circumstances, impartiality, goodness, or a sense of keeping out of trouble and turn situations into favorable circumstances. Is it possible to find a common ground for these different

definitions that would provide us even with some very general and basic meaning of *ren* that is not just an accumulation of all these definitions?

A.C. Graham, in an effort to explain *ren*, defines it as "an unselfish concern for the welfare of others," or covering "like English 'noble' the whole range of superior qualities distinctive of the man of breeding,"[8] or "the orientation which makes right action effortless, following attainment of just the right balance between self and other, a precarious balance which hardly anyone is able to sustain," or "the perfectly and permanently disinterested person," or "a matter of attuning the desires on behalf of self and others," or "the instant in which you conquer self to see self and others in perfect proportion" being "an instant in which accord with conventions becomes effortless and the exercise of style within fixed forms is an uninterrupted flow."[9] We do not only see Graham's struggle to pin down this complex notion (taking recourse to such open definitions as "the whole range of superior qualities") but even in his core interpretation of *ren* which we could summarize as 'an unselfish, disinterested attitude towards the self that by attuning the own desires and being concerned with the welfare of others creates a proper balance between self and others and thus makes right and conventional actions effortless' a number of central elements of the above small selection of passages is missing such as the hierarchical aspect of obedience, genuineness (as authentic expression of natural interests and desires) and the aspect of favorable action (which probably is different from right or conventional action). To include these aspects into Graham's definition appears not convincing as it would probably boil down the gentleman to a butler.

Paul Goldin gives a similar definition as Graham: "Humanity (*ren* JG) […] is the virtue based on the method of *shu*. […] *Shu* is placing oneself in the position of others, and acting towards them as one imagines they would desire. […] By taking oneself as analogy."[10] Again, a number of elements highlighted in our passages above are missing in this definition.

Ames and Rosemont who translate *ren* as "authoritative conduct" and "authoritative person," even define it more open as "one's entire person: one's cognitive, aesthetic, moral, and religious sensibilities as they are expressed in one's ritualized roles and relationships."[11] They choose to define the term so broad that it includes almost all aspects of a person, the prize being that it cannot be used anymore with any analytical precision.

[8] Graham 1989: 19.
[9] Graham 1989: 22.
[10] Goldin 2011: 19.
[11] Ames and Rosemont 1998: 49.

Arthur Waley gives a similarly wide definition as "'good' in a extremely wide and general sense."[12] To illustrate this, he continues to list a selection of *Lunyu*-definitions of *ren*.

It is a typical and, given the nature of the *Lunyu*, necessary feature of intellectual history analyses of the *Lunyu* that they never use all the available features of a concept or an idea but have to give selective accounts of them as the many diverse definitions given in the *Lunyu* cannot be (and are not meant to be) boiled down to a less complex common ground.

The definitions of *ren* given in the cited *Lunyu* passages above (and there are many more in the *Lunyu*) occur in isolated form or within small clusters of two to seven thematically related passages in different places of the *Lunyu*. The only attempt to relate them to another is the editorial grouping of some of them. However, as shown by the examples above, this does not mean that the grouped passages are in any way conceptually more related to another than they are to other *ren*-passages in the *Lunyu*. The explanations of *ren* given in this small sample show that we find no consistent meaning of the term *ren*, no common concept, idea or even problem that would link these different propositions. This also applies to other terms, concepts or ideas in the *Lunyu*. The book resembles a collection of tesserae some of which have been loosely grouped together like the *ren*-clusters in 1.2-1.3, 4.1-4.7, 12.1-12.3, 15.9-15.10 or the *xiao*-cluster in 2.5-2.8. Intellectual historians have not only shaped these tesserae by their diverging interpretations but have also always used them highly selectively to reconstruct very different images of Confucius and his philosophy.[13] I do not think that one has to take a post-modern perspective to claim that the *Lunyu* is an assemblage of mutable tesserae that in their entirety do not (and never intended to) amount to a full mosaic.[14] Instead, they can only be (and have always been) used selectively to form an incomplete mosaic of fragments. The *Lunyu* can thus be compared to a mosaic construction kit or a box of Lego bricks containing individual textual units that according to different interpretations can even change color and shape and have to be (and have always been) used as convertible modular building blocks to construct a variety of Confucianisms.

The systematic incoherence of the book thus makes it difficult if not impossible to approach the *Lunyu* by means of an intellectual history analysis. The reason for this lack of coherence is that the primary purpose of the book is not to formulate a consistent position within an intellectual landscape but to portray the Master in as many facets as were available

[12] Waley 1989: 28.
[13] See e.g. Harbsmeier 1990 and, for a different reconstruction, Wagner 1991 and 2004.
[14] This reluctance to provide a clear image of Confucius is somehow mirrored in the later iconoclast critique against the production of Confucius images. See Sommer 2002 and Murray 2001 and 2009.

from scattered sources at the time of its compilation. This, however, raises the question whether the *Lunyu* even though not aiming to construct a specific intellectual discourse does at least construct a particular Confucius. If the *Lunyu* takes part in an intellectual discourse on the nature, the character, the personality, the importance or the impact of Confucius then an intellectual history approach could probably be used to date the *Lunyu* by locating the *Lunyu* portrayal of Confucius in a history of portrayals of Confucius the phenomenon that Hunter calls "Kongzigraphy."[15]

It has been noted by many earlier authors that the *Lunyu*-Confucius is quite distinct from later depictions of the sage. Gu Jiegang suggested that we should study "one Confucius at a time".[16] Arthur Waley has noted that "the picture of Confucius given in the Analects […] differs from that of all other books in that it contains no elements that bear patently and obviously the stamp of folk-lore or hagiography."[17] The manufacturing of the apotheosis of Confucius as quasi-divine being has been object of many studies and a historical development of Confucius portrayals is generally assumed in literature on Confucius.[18]

Yet, this process is difficult to date because there is no clear line of development from a Confucius bare of any hagiographic elements to the divine sage of later ages. We rather see the appropriation, transformation and invention of Confucius lore in Warring States and Han texts and constant constructions and reconstructions of Confucius tessellae. These pieces aim in the first place at supporting arguments of the respective texts and certainly not to contribute to a complete and coherent image of Confucius. To combine them, therefore, in order to gain an understanding of Confucius leads nowhere. Yet, these pieces gain their authority only by being recognizable and convincingly identifiable as part of a discourse which I will call "Confucian" because it gains its identity solely by being related to Confucius. This discourse is intertextual as it is not based on, or shaped by, one single text but constituted by a network of interrelated texts. The discourse is neither systematic nor unified but consists of single themes which are first loosely and later (by Sima Qian) more coherently linked to a biographical narrative. These themes can be regarded as individual and quite independent

[15] Hunter 2012: 130.
[16] "The Confucius of the Chunqiu period was a gentleman, The Confucius of the Zhanguo period was a sage, the Confucius of the Western Han period was a pope, the Confucius of the Eastern Han period was again a sage, and now he is just about to turn into a gentleman again" 春秋时的孔子是君子，战国的孔子是圣人，西汉时的孔子是教主，东汉后的孔子又成了圣人，到现在又快要成君子了。 Gu Jiegang 1988, vol. 2, 130.
[17] Waley 1989, 14.
[18] Cf. for example Nylan and Wilson 2010. As we know this process is still going on. In 2006, an author with the (quite pretentious) synonym Sanren 三人 edited a book titled *Liushige Kongzi* 六十个孔子 (*Sixty Confuciuses*) giving an overview over sixty different approaches to Confucius including essays by Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Lin Yutang, Gu Jiegang, Feng Youlan, Chen Duxiu and others.

subdiscourses.[19] Despite all their changes throughout Chinese intellectual history these subdiscourses gain their identity and historical continuity by being related to specific *problems* which are held to be identical and continuous problems by the participants of the discourse. The identity of these problem-related discourses is marked by intertextual references to the same passages of early texts, by the usage of a set of interrelated terms or utterances which constitute a particular problem,[20] by references to stories from an extensive archive of historical narratives which are associated to particular problems, or by references to protagonists that synecdochically represent such stories and the problems they stand for.

As the Confucian discourse consists of numerous independent subdiscourses which gain their identity and historical continuity by being related to problems that are considered as identical by the members of the discourse,[21] we will use the approach of a 'history of problems' to date particular Confucian subdiscourses which occur in the *Lunyu*.[22]

A detailed analysis of the development of the main subdiscourses regarding Confucius is still outstanding, and such an analysis has never been used to date the *Lunyu*. The only more detailed work analyzing one of these subdiscourses has been produced by David Elstein. In his PhD thesis (2006) he analyzed depictions of Confucius' authority and teacher-disciple

[19] Early Chinese thought is often organized in thematic discourses. Discussions on particular themes (such as moral tendencies in human nature, Heaven's will, or the existence or ability of ghosts and spirits) are in many cases exclusively lead by certain thinkers. They refer to these themes by using the same terms and formulations, metaphors and historical precedents. The themes are often entirely absent in texts of other contemporary thinkers.

[20] An early Chinese attempt to assemble the central key terms of Neo-Confucianist discourses in one book was Chen Chun's 陳淳 (1159-1223) *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義 (transl. by Wing-tsit Chan 1986). Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (1909-2004) made a similar attempt with his *Zhongguo gudian zhexue gainian fanchou lun* 中國古典哲學概念範疇要論 in 1989 (transl. E. Ryden 2001).

[21] I will define "discourse" here, following the approach by Busse and Teubert (1994), as a virtual text corpus consisting of Chinese texts written in the 3rd century BC by members of the Chinese intellectual elite that deal with a particular problem (which I am going to define), refer to each other and thus create an intertextual relationship. The unity of the discourse is delineated by my own definition of the particular problem(s) to which the texts relate.

[22] Whether the problems discussed in these subdiscourses were de facto relating to identical problems based in human reason as Windelband (*Geschichte der Philosophie: Geschichte der Probleme und der zu ihrer Lösung erzeugten Begriffe*, 1892) and Hartmann (1910, 469), the inventors of *Problemgeschichte*, believed or whether they actually change and are merely reconstructed within the historical awareness of the readers and their own investigative horizon as Collingwood (who thinks that in order to understand a philosophical text, a historian of philosophy "must see what the philosophical problem was, of which the author is here stating his solution." See 1946, 283) and Gadamer (1990, 375–384) see it is not relevant to our investigation. Following Gadamer's harsh critique against Kant's and Neo-Kantian scholars' (such as Windelband and Hartmann) concept of problem history which he saw as a "bastard of historism" (1990, 382) later scholars like Sgarbi have in my view simplified the Neo-Kantian positions and downplayed the important historical dimension which can be found in the works of both Windelband and Hartmann. Cf. Sgarbi 2010 and his very similar English article 2011. See a more differentiated analysis in Oexle 2001.

relationship in the *Lunyu*.[23] He did not, however, compare the ways this subdiscourse was dealt with in the *Lunyu* vis à vis other early texts in order to date the *Lunyu*.

Looking at this history of portrayals of Confucius two other subdiscourses appear equally important in early portrayals of Confucius. Both can be identified as continuous topoi in early Chinese intellectual history and appear in such a dense frequency in early Chinese texts that historical shifts can be determined. Both subdiscourses are intertextual as they are not based on, or shaped by, one single text but constituted by a network of interrelated texts. Despite all their changes throughout Chinese intellectual history these subdiscourses gain their identity and historical continuity by being related to specific *problems* that are held to be identical and continuous problems by the participants of the subdiscourse. The identity of these problem-related subdiscourses is marked by intertextual references to the same passages of early texts, by the usage of a set of interrelated terms or utterances which constitute a particular problem,[24] by references to stories from an extensive archive of historical narratives which are associated to particular problems, or by references to protagonists that synecdochically represent such stories and the problems they stand for.

The two subdiscourses are the nature of Confucius' knowledge and Confucius' failure to take an office to use this knowledge to implement an ideal socio-political order. Both themes turn into problems when linked to a) Confucius himself, especially if they are widened to b) relate to sages in a more general sense:

1. a) Of what kind was Confucius' knowledge? What did he know and what did he not know?
   b) What is sagely knowing?
2. a) Why did Confucius never hold a high office?
   b) What is the relation between sageliness and appointment to an official post?

The developments of these two discourses are historically interrelated. The greater Confucius' knowledge came to be imagined the more difficult it became to explain why he was not properly employed and the less reliable the relationship between knowledge and success appeared to be. To put it the other way around, the less reliable the relationship between

[23] Elstein 2006 and 2009.
[24] An early Chinese attempt to assemble the central key terms of Neo-Confucian discourses in one book was Chen Chun's 陳淳 (1159-1223) *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義 (transl. by Wing-tsit Chan 1986). Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (1909-2004) made a similar attempt with his *Zhongguo gudian zhexue gainian fanchou lun* 中國古典哲學概念範疇要論 in 1989 (transl. E. Ryden 2001).

knowledge and success was assumed to be, the more plausible it was to assume that Confucius despite, or indeed just because of, his failure was a true sage.

1. Knowledge

In Chinese literature of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, Confucius is mostly referred to as a learned scholar whose abundant knowledge and clear sense of morality lends authority to arguments that relate to him, mostly in the form of quotes.[25] He is quoted as the central authority in the appendices to the Book of Changes as well as in many chapters of the ritual texts and also in the *Hanfeizi* and *Mengzi* etc., in all cases lending authority to the various lines of arguments.[26] In many other texts we find him in the role of a teacher in dialogues. In the *Guoyu* (especially "Luyu xia" 魯語下) and *Hanfeizi* we find Confucius in the role of someone who is asked for explanations of natural calamities and anomalies which are taken to be based in supernatural institutions like spirits, ancestors, or Heaven. Confucius answers these kinds of questions in all cases in a way, which never leaves a question open but in each case gives a full explanation without reference to the supernatural.[27] Confucius does not play an important role in the huge corpus of excavated texts from the pre-Han era.[28] In many of the tomb text corpora he does not appear at all. Even in the "philosophical library" of Guodian he is absent.[29] The only pre-Han corpus in which he features more prominently is the Shanghai Museum collection where he appears in eleven or twelve texts, mainly in the role of a teacher teaching his disciples and rulers about poetry, ritual and government.[30] In the *Zuo zhuan* we find Confucius, like in most other early texts, without exception in the role of the sage who knows the historical context and provides morally correct judgements. In the *Xunzi*, Confucius is presented as one of the great Ru who knows everything about right and wrong and has the elaborate Ru knowledge that enables him to govern like the ancient sage kings.

[25] See for a more detailled discussion of my argument in the first part of the paper Gentz 2012.
[26] Whether and how these references to Confucius are similar or related to the way as the *Shijing* and *Shangshu* are referred to in other texts as sources of authority needs to be discussed elsewhere.
[27] *Guoyu* ("Luyu xia" 魯語下) 1988: 201, 213, 214; Chen 1974, 686.
[28] This changes slightly with the Han manuscripts. In the Mawangdui texts he appears in the commentarial texts on the *Yijing*, we find him in one text (*Rujia zhe yan* 儒家者言) of the Fuyang Shanggudui manuscripts, and two texts (*Lunyu* fragments and *Rujia zhe yan* 儒家者言) of the Dingzhou manuscripts include his sayings.
[29] Unless we assume that the "*zi*" 子 in the formulation "*zi yue*" 子曰 in the *Zi yi* 緇衣 refers to him.
[30] See the texts, "Kongzi shilun 孔子詩論," "Min zhi fumu 民之父母," "Zi Gao 子羔," "Lu bang da han 魯邦大旱," "Zhong gong 仲弓," "Xiang bang zhi dao 相邦之道," "Ji Kangzi wen yu Kongzi 季康子問于孔子," "Junzi wei li 君子為禮" (where Confucius is even considered worthier than Shun and Yu), "Dizi wen 弟子問" (which is similar to the *Lunyu* in many respects), "Kongzi jian Ji Huanzi 孔子見季桓子," "Yan Yuan wen yu Kongzi 顏淵問於孔子" etc., probably "Zi yi 緇衣."

The question whether Confucius is omniscient (無所不知) is also discussed and confirmed by his disciples.[31] The *Xunzi* is the first text that addresses the question which kind of knowledge great Ru possess and clearly defines it in contrast to the expert knowledge of other specialists in which they are superior to everyone else. It makes it clear however, that the kind of knowledge which great Ru possess is the most important of all.[32]

The *Lunyu* depicts Confucius differently. Confucius appears not only as a great teacher who knows right and wrong in all circumstances, knows the correct meaning of terms and all the historical narratives, but as a more complex personality. He is portrayed as a multi-layered and ambiguous figure who is uncertain about many issues, poses questions rather than providing answers and in many instances even questions, in a rather fundamental way, the possibility of knowledge by clearly pointing out its limits. The *Lunyu* often chooses a negative mode in describing what Confucius refrained from doing, did not like, criticized, was not able to accomplish and did not teach.[33] The readers learn that "The Master was resolute in four things: don't speculate, don't take anything as necessary, don't insist rigidly on certainties, don't put yourself at the center of things."[34] They further learn that "The Master didn't talk of prodigies, use of force, disorder or spirits,"[35] that the Master did not talk about "natural disposition (*xing* 性) or the Way of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道),"[36] or that the Master transmitted but did not create.[37] We thus gain the image of a master who pays great attention drawing a very clear line between what he knows and what he does not know.[38] In 2.17 he teaches Zilu what wisdom/knowledge (*zhi* 知) is, namely to know what one knows and to know what one does not know.[39] In 9.8 the Master claims that he has no knowledge and only infers from the given evidence. The *Lunyu* has plenty of statements that give further expression to this attitude, which reflects Confucius' doubts (*huo* 惑), unease, incertainty and not-knowing. Confucius often appears fragile, full of sorrow, worries (*you* 憂) or despair

[31] Wang 1988, 531.
[32] Wang 1988, 122–124.
[33] *Lunyu* 2.18, 7.27, 3.21, 5.13, 7.1, 7.21, 7.23, 7.24, 9.1, 9.7, 11.12, 13.3, 14.6.
[34] *Lunyu* 9.4. 子絕四: 毋意，毋必，毋固，毋我.
[35] *Lunyu* 7.21. 子不語怪，力，亂，神. For the use of force see *Lunyu* 15.1.
[36] *Lunyu* 5.13.
[37] *Lunyu* 7.1. 子曰: 述而不作.
[38] Further *Lunyu* evidence in 2.17, 2.18, 9.8, 11.12, 13.3, 14.1 etc. This skepticism of Confucius in regard to his own knowledge was cited already in 1854 by Henry David Thoreau who greatly admired this attitude. Cf. Thoreau 1996, 14.
[39] This passage is a good example for *zhi* meaning "to know" and not merely "to understand" or "to recognize," the meanings of which would not really make sense in an interpretation of this passage.

because he has never met (*wei jian* 未見…) excellent people or is miserable himself,[40] and he is presented in states of uncertainty in which he claims that he doesn't know an answer (*bu zhi ye* 不知也, *wei zhi* 未知) and has no solution for certain fundamental questions.[41] Moreover, there are many categorial statements about what Confucius did not talk about and what he did not teach.[42] We do not find such a portrayal of Confucius' limits of knowledge in other early texts.[43] And *Lunyu* 14.28 even reflects on this as being quite peculiar:

> 子曰：「君子道者三，我無能焉：仁者不憂，知者不惑，勇者不懼。」子貢曰：「夫子自道也。」
> The Master said: 'It is three elements of the Way of a gentleman that I am not able to realize: the benevolent do not worry, the wise do not doubt, the brave do not fear.' Zigong said: 'This is your own Way.'

The only text I am aware of where, in regard to knowledge, Confucius displays a similar attitude as the *Lunyu*-Confucius is the *Gongyang zhuan* (which claims to pass down Confucius' reading of the *Chunqiu* and thus Confucius' exegetical attitude).[44] In a number of passages the commentary admits openly that it does not know how to interpret a certain entry, sentence or word. The *Gongyang zhuan* in these cases sometimes writes "*wu wen yan er*" 無聞焉爾 (nothing has been heard of this/him).[45]

If we follow Confucius' statement in *Lunyu* 15.26 that he can still remember the days when a scribe left gaps in the patterns of the records, this historiographical practice of the

[40] *Lunyu* 5.10, 5.11, 5.27, 7.3, 7.5, 7.26, 9.9, 11.2, 13.21, 15.13. The rhetoric of never yet having seen some kinds of excellent people can already been seen in the *Dizi wen* 2005: 269, 280 (strips 4, 21, 22) and 271, 273 (strips 6, 9).
[41] *Lunyu* 2.17, 3.11, 5.8, 5.19, 13.3, 15.1.
[42] *Lunyu* 2.18, 7.27, 3.21, 5.13, 7.1, 7.21, 7.23, 7.24, 9.1, 9.7, 11.12, 13.3, 14.6.
[43] There is a passage in the *Xunzi* in which it reflects in a way rather reminiscent of *Lunyu* 2.17 about knowledge (also in a dialogue with Zilu): "Therefore the gentleman when he knows something he says he knows it when he doesn't know it he says that he doesn't know it, and this is the essence of talking." 故君子知之曰知之，不知曰不知，言之要也！ Now this passage follows immediately after the passage quoted above in which the omniscience of Confucius is confirmed by his disciples. Chapter 29 in which these passages occur is part of the last block of *Xunzi* chapters which by some scholars have been dated to Han times, so they might have been influenced by *Lunyu* material. As chapter 29 does not reflect core philosophical thoughts associated with Xunzi and is to great parts composed of dialogues between Zilu and Confucius they might also reflect earlier *Lunyu* material.
[44] That this is an assumption of the *Gongyang* text itself is mainly based on the commentary in Zhao 12.1 where *zi yue* 子曰 clearly refers to Confucius as he refers to himself as Qiu 丘 at the end of the quote. In this quote he explicitely states that he is responsible for the wording of the *Chunqiu* 其詞則丘有罪焉耳！ See a translation of the full passage below.
[45] *GYZ* Yin 2.7, Huan 14.3, Wen 14.11 (I refer to the *Gongyang zhuan* by giving numbers for each entry according to the arrangement of the text in the *Harvard Yenching Index* by Hong Ye 1983). Even in a case in which it is quite obvious from the recording pattern of the *Chunqiu* that a character (auch as the month 月 in Huan 14.3) is missing the *Gongyang zhuan* takes the transmitted form of the *Chunqiu* as authoritative and rather doubts its own understanding than the reliability of the record.

Gongang zhuan seems to reflect exactly this attitude, an attitude of being clearly aware of the limits of one's own knowledge.

In other cases the *Gongyang zhuan* gives two possible options without making a decision, clearly marking the gaps of historical knowledge. In these cases it writes "*wei zhi qi wei a yu*? *wei b yu*?" 未知其為 a 與? 為 b 與? (we don't know whether a or b is the case).[46] In other cases, the *Gongyang zhuan* shows where Confucius was in doubt like in the following example:

> 曷為以二日卒之. 恆也. 甲戌之日亡. 己丑之日死而得. 君子疑焉. 故以二日卒之也.
> Why are two dates given in recording his death? He became crazy. On the day *jiaxu* (12th month, 21st day) he disappeared and on the day *jichou* (1st month, 6th day) he was found dead. The gentleman was in doubt about [the exact date of his death] and therefore used two dates to record his death.[47]

In some cases the commentary also presents several alternative views: "*huo yue a* (*huo yue b*)" 或曰 a (或曰 b) (someone else says a [someone else says b]).[48] We find this either when alternative historical narratives are presented[49] or when alternative ritual rules or explanations are given. Sometimes the *Gongyang zhuan* expresses a preference for one of the given options.[50] In most cases, however, the *Gongyang zhuan* wants to point out that in these particular instances the message of the *Chunqiu* does not lie in its historical accuracy but in hinting at something else (which is then explained by the commentary).

The records concerning calamities or anomalies (*zai yi* 災異) are indicative of another feature of the *Gongyang zhuan* which it shares with the *Lunyu* Confucius who "didn't talk of prodigies, the use of force, disorder or spirits."[51] Only two out of 140 such records reflect the cause of these natural calamities and anomalies.[52] Most of the entries about natural calamities or anomalies are not commented upon at all. The *Gongyang zhuan* at the most only explains

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[46] Huan 9.4, Wen 11.6, Xiang 2.7, Zhao 31.6, Ai 14.1.
[47] Huan 5.1.
[48] Zhuang 25.3, Min 2.6, Xi 33.3, Cheng 1.6, Xiang 19.2. In Yamada 1957, Yamada Taku has interpreted these passages as a proof of the multilayered character of the *Gongyang zhuan*. He has added to these another 32 *Gongyang*-passages in which statements of the *Gongyang zhuan* expresses doubt by adding the term *gai* 蓋 ("probably"); cf. 166–169.
[49] Cheng 1.6. Who defeated them? Jin probably defeated them. Someone else says: the MaoRong defeated them. 孰敗之. 蓋晉敗之. 或曰. 貿戎敗之.
[50] Ai 14.1.
[51] *Lunyu* 7.21. 子不語怪，力，亂，神.
[52] Xi 15.11 and Xuan 15.9 (probably also Ai 14.1). In Wen 9.12, an earthquake is just defined as "a movement of the earth" (動地也) although it is qualified as a record of an anomaly (記異也), and in Ai 4.8 the burning of an altar is classified as a conflagration (災, as opposed to Xi 15.11, where a lightning that strikes an ancestral temple is classified as an anomaly [記異也] and explained as a "warning from Heaven" 天戒), the reason for its recording is explained accordingly just as a record of a conflagration (記災也).

that this is an entry concerning a natural calamity or anomaly. Given the fact that the *Gongyang* commentary normally gives reasons for strange phenomena and explains causes of recorded events one can take this silence as a practice of not talking about supernatural phenomena. This resembles the Confucius of the *Lunyu* who, according to the *Gongyang zhuan*, in his compilation of the *Chunqiu* deleted records from the original annalistic sources that appeared overly fantastic to him.[53]

Other methods of his *Chunqiu* compilation indicated in the *Gongyang zhuan* also conform to typical features of the *Lunyu* Confucius. Accordingly, in compiling the *Chunqiu* Confucius used most of the historical material without major changes (see quote below). Thus, by and large the *Chunqiu* does not differ fundamentally from the original *Chunqiu* of Lu. Confucius in the *Gongyang zhuan*, just like in the *Lunyu*, is portrayed as a transmitter, not a creator,[54] and as an editor who inserts his own judgements in such a subtle way that it does not affect the value of the *Chunqiu* as a historial record by trustworthy scribes (*xin shi* 信史).

To summarize, firstly, within the *Gongyang zhuan* we find the open admission of not knowing certain things rather than the ironclad answering of all questions. Secondly, we find an attitude that may be described as caution in respect to speaking about or even to explaining supernatural phenomena. Finally, we find an extremely great respect for the original annalistic text, which in major parts provides the source material of the new compilation with minor changes only. These changes scarcely interfere with the historical content of the text in order to transmit it as a reliable historical source. In the exegesis of the *Gongyang zhuan* we thus find exactly the same attitudes that we found as unique attributions of Confucius in the *Lunyu*. Unlike the *Lunyu*, however, the *Gongyang zhuan* does not talk about these attitudes and does not attribute them explicitly to Confucius. We only find them implicit in the exegetical practice of the commentary.

Conclusion

The unique and quite obvious parallels of a doubtful attitude towards knowledge and understanding that we find throughout the *Lunyu* and the *Gongyang zhuan* are striking. But the following problems arise when we try to infer a date of the *Lunyu* from these unique parallels?

[53] Cf. the case of falling stars that plummeted all the way down to one foot from the earth and then returned in Zhuang 7.3.
[54] *Lunyu* 7.1. 子曰: 述而不作，信而好古.

First, the *Lunyu* does not provide an epistemological discourse on knowledge, it not even gives reasons for the Master's behavior. The Master's attitude towards knowledge has to be inferred from short statements that do not reason or argue. These statements are exemplary and casuistic and often describe practices rather than analyzing concepts or ideas. The *Lunyu* therefore does not contribute to an ongoing discourse on knowledge and also does not formulate a distinct historical position that could be dated.

Second, there is even less of an explicit intellectual discourse on knowledge in the *Gongyang zhuan*. The main evidence we have to infer a particular attitude towards knowledge is the exegetical practice of the commentary. The relation between exegetical practice and intellectual discourse, however, is hard to determine and even harder to date.

Moreover, the dating of the *Gongyang zhuan* is not clear enough to base the dating of another text on it. My own dating of the *Gongyang zhuan* is tentative and not conclusive.[55] It suggests dates of particular stages within a process of text formation within which I would not be able to locate the exegetical attitude that resembles the one in the *Lunyu*.

Furthermore, there are no mutual references in the *Lunyu* and the *Gongyang zhuan*. They also do not use a common terminology. We therefore have no indication that both attitudes were related to a common discourse. Different kinds of skeptical attitudes can be found everywhere in the early texts over a time span of several hundred years, the skeptical attitude towards knowledge is just one of these and does not necessarily originate either in the *Lunyu* or the *Gongyang zhuan*.

Even if we assume that they related to a common discourse, the parallels do not necessarily indicate a common date. The *Gongyang zhuan* was quite prominent in the Early Han and, even if it would date early, could have influenced *Lunyu* compilers then as well.

Although some features of the *Lunyu* Confucius are unique and only shared with some aspects of the *Gongyang* commentary, there is no historical development from a Confucius who is skeptical towards knowledge to one who is omniscient. As the omniscient Confucius already appears in such early texts as the *Zuo zhuan*, the *Guoyu* or the *Mengzi*, the only possibility to date such a non-omniscient Confucius would in such a timeline be an earlier date. It appears much more likely then that the *Lunyu* reflects a tradition that has to be defined in social or local terms rather than in terms of time.

[55] See Gentz 2001, 345–403, with conclusion on 401–402. See also Gentz (forthcoming).

The quite distinct portrayal of a doubting Confucius in the *Lunyu* is not part of a systematic discourse on knowledge. Doubt, sorrow and uncertainty are rather reported as features of Confucius's personality than discussed as a methodological or epistemological issues. They can thus not be related to any datable discourse.

2. Success

A typical successful life for anyone whom we would imagine as a proper Confucian of the late imperial era in China would include an in-depth education in the Confucian classics, a brilliant performance in the state examinations and, finally, a high post as a government official.[56]

One of the central messages of these and earlier historiographical and hagiographical accounts, starting probably with narratives such as those transmitted in the *Shangshu* and the *Zuo zhuan*, is the empirical proof of the early Zhou ideology that there is a relationship between moral conduct and success in life. That virtuous behavior is the most powerful means to transform political and social contexts is an assumption that can be found in all texts connected to the Confucian tradition.

Yet, the three most eminent founders of that tradition, Kong Qiu 孔丘, Meng Ke 孟軻 (371-289) and Xun Kuang 荀況 (c. 310- c. 210), did not match this ideal pattern of a successful life in their own individual biographies. Although certainly following their moral principles and knowing and teaching how to rule a state none of them held a long-term high government post or was able to bring about a change in their own deplorable times. The book *Xunzi* even concludes with an eulogy explaining why Master Xun, although he held no official post, had no followers and was not widely known yet still has to be considered a worthy with the mind of a sage (*sheng zhi xin* 聖之心) who just did not meet the right times (*bu yu shi* 不遇時). This fundamental contradiction between sagehood and successful life has fostered a number of discussions about the life of Confucius, considered by some to be the last of the great sages in the world.

The main works that I have found to reflect this discussion in the pre-Qin era are the *Qiongda yi shi* 窮達以時 manuscript from Guodian 郭店 the *Guishen zhi ming* 鬼神之明

[56] See the many exemplary biographies of eminent and model Confucian scholar-officials in the dynastic histories, in diverse novels and in collections that bear titles such as: *Xianru gongde lu* 賢儒功德錄, *Mingchen kaoyi* 名臣考義, *Mingru zhuan* 名儒傳, *Xueshu bian* 學術編, x-*ru xuean* x-儒學案, *zongzhuan* 宗傳, *Renwu kao* 人物考, *Xueshu lu* 學術錄 etc. Cf. Wilson1995; Ching and Fang 1987; Chen 1994.

from the Shanghai Museum corpus, the *Mengzi* 孟子, the *Xunzi* 荀子, and the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋. The analysis of the development of this discussion will finally result in a further argument on the dating of the *Lunyu*.

I. *Qiongda yi shi* [57]

The text starts with a general statement:

> There is Heaven and there is man. Heaven and man are distinct. When investigating Heaven and man's distinction, one understands what makes things going. When there is the right man, but there are not the right times, then even though he be worthy, he will not be able to put his worthiness into action. However, if there were the right times, what difficulties will there be?

This introductory passage is followed by a range of historical examples that illustrate this statement and is concluded as follows:

> That in the beginnings [these virtuous men] lived in obscurity, and later had their names extolled, is not because their virtue had increased.

A second passage with further examples ends with the following explanation:

> [In all the above cases] whether or not they encountered favorable circumstance – lay with Heaven.
> Their actions were not executed for the sake of success; therefore when failing they were not *distressed*.
> *Their efforts were not made* for the sake of achieving a reputation; therefore when nobody knew them, they did not feel disgraceful.

This is followed by a third passage of examples that ends with the following passage:

> Failure and success happen according to time;
> […]
> It is for this reason that the gentleman prizes self-examination.

This early short text summarizes the theme of our discussion in an extremely dense and stylistically sophisticated form. It shows that the main arguments and terms of a discussion on the disturbing problem that empirical evidence cannot prove a relationship between leading a good life and enjoying a good fate were already set up around 300 BC. They were embedded in a discourse on timeliness that referred to a number of well-known historical precedents. The text further shows that this specific discourse at that early stage was not necessarily

[57] Several English translations of this text have been made: Meyer 2012, 57–67; Cook 2012, 453–464; Gentz (unpublished manuscript 2014).

related to Confucius, whose case would not be missing from any later discussion on the theme but is not mentioned here.

The central conceptual terms in this discourse are *shi* 世 and *shi* 時 as the basic notions of time, the first referring primarily to the time of a particular social setting, the second in a more abstract sense to a period or a concrete point of time. These terms are also used as the main notions of time in all later discussions on timeliness.

"Encountering [favorable circumstance]" (*yu* 遇) is yet another central concept that is related to Heaven and to time and refers to encounters that are taken as condition for the realization of a hidden potential, a realization that leads to a successful, good life. The term for this kind of realization is *da* 達.

Opposed to Heaven are humans *ren* 人 with whom the notions of virtues *de* 德 and merits *gong* 功 are associated. These depend on men themselves. They are, however, only potentials that do not have the power to bring about a successful good life by themselves. They are regarded as failures (*qiong* 窮) if for whatever reason they cannot be implemented by means of an official position. If they can be implemented they are sucessful (*da* 達). The terms *qiong* 窮 and *da* 達 are also used in other texts on timeliness. The *Lunyu*, the *Xunzi*, the *Zhuangzi* and the *Lüshi Chunqiu* employ these terms in the same discursive contexts.

The two historical precedents that the discussions frequently refer to are the sage emperor Shun 舜 and Wu Zixu 伍子胥. The third and central case for all later discussions on success and failure, which is not listed in the *Qiongda yi shi* is Confucius, especially the situation when he was stranded with his disciples between Chen and Cai.[58]

The main point established by the *Qiongda yi shi* is the strict separation between Heaven and man. It clearly defines and explains the limits of man's effort in regard to a successful good life. Neither virtue nor merit are sufficient to generate success in life. The efficacy of any human action only depends on the right moment in time, which lies entirely with Heaven, not with man. In the *Qiongda yi shi* the Heavenly sphere is so strictly separated from man that not even divination by oracles, milfoil stalks or seasonal rituals can indicate appropriate timing for human action. How can humans then lead a good life? The last paragraph of the *Qiongda yi shi* formulates the consequences which this insight (proven empirically in the text with historical examples) leaves for human aspirations to be drawn. As humans have no influence on the efficacy of their actions, the only thing they can do is

[58] This story has been analyzed in detail by Makeham 1998. A similar analysis of Confucius stories that appear across early Chinese texts has been presented by Weingarten 2010.

generate the potential for virtuous action, *de xing* 德行, and entirely concentrate on their own perfection, *fan ji* 反己, without any consideration as to its effects. The *Qiongda yi shi* does not discuss in how far the virtues cultivated by men provide a condition of success, a claim put forward in later discussions.

II *Guishen zhi ming*[59]

The *Guishen zhi ming* takes the same basic problem as starting point of its discussion on the capability of ghosts and spirits to interfere in the human world to ensure that rewards and punishments are applied according to the virtue of the human protagonists. Presenting some of the historical examples connected to this discourse (Shun, Wu Zixu etc.) it concludes in a similar fashion as the *Qiongda yi shi*:

> If one examines this, then some among the good people were not rewarded and some among the brutes were not punished.

The text then provides its own explanation:

> Therefore, when I accordingly propose that 'ghosts and spirits are not clear,' then this must have a [further] reason. Is it that their power suffices to reach out to them and yet they won't do it? I do not know. Or is it that their power in fact does not suffice to reach out to them? I also do not know. As these two are different, I [just] say: there are things ghosts and spirits are clear about and things they are not clear about.[60]

The *Guishen zhi ming* refers to a different conceptual framework to respond to the problem. That Shun became Son of Heaven was not because he encountered Yao but because ghosts and spirits in his case were clear about his good actions. That the worthy Wu Zixu died was due to the ghosts and spirits not being clear about his worthiness in this case.

The same general empirical problem of a disconnect between virtue and reward is taken up by both texts to provide two different models of explanation: fateful encounters and the powers of penetration of ghosts and spirits. In contrast to the *Qiongda yi shi*'s encounter approach, the demonological approach which the *Guishen zhi ming* takes in the discourse of

[59] Several English translations of this text have been made: Ding 2006; Brindley 2009; Sterckx 2013, 122–125; Marco Caboara (unpubl. manuscript 2013), Gentz (unpublished manuscript 2014).

[60] 女（如）曰（以）此詰之，則善者或不賞，而暴$_{03}$[者或不罰。古（故）] 吾因加"鬼神不明"，則必又（有）古（故）。亓（其）力能至（致）安（焉）而弗爲**唬**（乎）？吾弗智（知）也；意亓（其）力古（固）不能至（致）安（焉）**唬**（乎）？吾或(又)弗智（知）也。此兩者枳（歧）。吾古（故）$_{04}$[曰："鬼神又（有）] 所明，又（有）所不明。"此之胃（謂）**唬**（乎）！□$_{05}$

this problem is unique in early Chinese literature and is nowhere taken up, nor even referred to.

III *Mengzi*

The *Mengzi* discusses the same problem of how virtue is related to a successful life by approaching the whole issue from different assumptions. Focusing on Confucius as the new model of a sage, a successful life is defined in moral terms as a life in which inner virtues have been cultivated. Fame, wealth, and official positions are viewed as external success of secondary importance. Confucian virtues such as benevolence and righteousness are opposed to material profit, prosperity and animalish appetites, even in existential situations: a beggar rather starves to death than taking food that is given abusively as long as he has not lost his true heart,[61] which is now considered the most basic criterium for a successful life.

When the *Mengzi* discusses taking office it refers several times critically to Bo Yi,[62] the sage who refused to take office in times when a bad government was in place, for being too much concerned with being unsullied and not taking responsibility. It is equally critical against Yi Yin who in reverse would take any office in any circumstances without caring about the government. Confucius, however, who would take office according to circumstances,[63] is highly praised in the *Mengzi* as the sage who "gathered together all that was accomplished"[64] and surpassed all other sages.[65] He is therefore praised in the *Mengzi* as the "sage of timeliness" (孔子，聖之時者也 5B1). Timeliness (*shi* 時) here is obviously not related to a Heavenly moment that would have allowed Confucius to put his sagely potential into effect on an official post and bring peace and order to the world (as in the examples of the *Qiongda yi shi*), but to a perfect weighing up[66] of when to take office in times of disorder. Confucius, as we read in 3B3, like other gentlemen, was eager to take office; he even became agitated when he was not in service for three months and is criticized to show unseemly haste. Asked why then, being so eager to seek office, he found it so hard to take one, the *Mengzi* responds that he would never seek it by dishonorable means. According to *Mengzi* 5B4 Confucius' motives when seeking office were threefold: "Confucius took office sometimes

[61] Cf. *Mengzi* 6A10.
[62] Cf. *Mengzi* 2A2, 3B10, 5B1 much in the same manner as *Lunyu* 18.8.
[63] 可以仕則仕，可以止則止，可以久則久，可以速則速 2A2 or: 可以速而速，可以久而久，可以處而處，可以仕而仕 5B1.
[64] 集大成 5B1.
[65] 自生民以來，未有盛于孔子也 2A2.
[66] The concept of weighing up according to the circumstances (*quan* 權) is a central concept of Mencian philosophy. See also Vankeerberghen 2005–06.

because he could realize his Way, sometimes because he was treated with decency, and sometimes because a prince supported good people at court."[67] The whole book 5B deals with the question of what kind of relationship gentlemen and rulers should have, what kind of positions gentlemen should take, what salaries, and what kind of gifts, if any, they should accept. 5B5 gives poverty as another motive for Confucius to take (low) office. Poverty, however, plays no central role in the discussion about taking office. As Makeham notes: "the root problem was not poverty but powerlessness, a lack of position,"[68] and a constant "job hunting"[69] as reflected in several passages in the *Mengzi* including the above discussed 3B3 and 5B4.

Heaven is never mentioned in the discussion about office-seeking. Yet the *Mengzi* emphasizes Heaven as the crucial player in the determination of fate.[70] It is also Heaven, not man, that confers the right to rule over the empire upon someone.[71] But in contrast to the *Qiongda yi shi* these passages stand alone[72] and are nowhere developed into any conceptual discourse. In other passages, however, we do find an innovative concept that defines another external condition for the possibility of the appearance of a sage. In three passages the *Mengzi* introduces the concept of a general law of alterning order and disorder in the world.[73] It gives a very lively and dramatic narrative of these two alternating phases in 3B9 claiming in other passages that every 500 years a sage appears in the world.[74] Although these patterns appear like a Heavenly law, this idea is not developed in an argumentative discourse. Heaven is mentioned several times as the crucial determining force of history, fate and the positions of rulers. Yet the argumentative focus in the *Mengzi* when it comes to discussing Confucius' life lies rather on the lack of support of men in power. Confucius' failure is mainly explained as

[67]孔子有見行可之仕，有際可之仕，有公養之仕也。

[68] Makeham 1998, 78. The *Mozi*'s account of the story of Confucius between Chen and Cai also takes up the theme of poverty to illustrate Confucius' hypocrisy, see Makeham 1998, 81.

[69] Makeham 1998, 89.

[70] See the final passage of 1B16: "[Mengzi] said: 'When one moves, something causes it, when one halts, one is hindered by something. Moving and halting is nothing that lies in man's ability. That I did not encounter the Marquis of Lu is due to Heaven.'" 曰：行或使之，止或尼之，行止非人所能也。吾之不遇魯侯，天也。 The passage strikingly recalls *Qiongda yi shi*. Heaven, not man, is responsible for whether or not men encounter favorable circumstance (*yu* 遇). And destiny decides man's fate (see the first few passages of book 7A, also 2B13).

[71] Cf. *Mengzi* 5A5: "Wan Zhang said, 'That Yao gave the world to Shun, did that really happen?' Mengzi said: 'No. The Son of Heaven cannot give the world to somebody else.' 'In that case, who then gave the world to Shun?' [Mengzi] said: 'Heaven gave it to him.'" 萬章曰："堯以天下與舜，有諸？"孟子曰："否。天子不能以天下與人。""然則舜有天下也，孰與之？"曰："天與之。"

[72] For a more detailed analysis of "The Mencian view of ming ('fate'; destiny)" see Eno 2005, esp. 8–9.

[73] Cf. *Mengzi* 3B9: 天下之生久矣，一治一亂, see also 2B13, 7B38.

[74] Cf. *Mengzi* 2B13 and 7B38. Hans van Ess argues that 7B38 must be later, probably 2nd century BC. See van Ess 2009.

being caused by lack of human support, not by a lacking support by Heaven.[75] These statements somehow contradict other statements in the *Mengzi* which claim that benevolence (*ren*) is matchless.[76] Benevolence and other virtues appear like a magic weapon in these passages, particularly in times of disorder, yet, this power seems to be effective only if exerted by a ruler and seems conceptionally to be entirely disconnected from a sage like Confucius.

All in all it is quite striking how strictly the *Mengzi* separates power and responsibility on the one side from Confucius on the other so that his failure appears entirely as the failure of the authorities in power. The main question in the *Mengzi* therefore is: where and how do we seek office at ruler's courts? The case of Confucius, the greatest sage of all, is nowhere connected to Heaven, timeliness or other external non-human forces.

Qiongda yi shi, *Guishen zhi ming* and *Mengzi* provide three different approaches to the basic problem that morality and fate often do not correspond. The *Qiongda yi shi* explains this by a strict separation of Heaven and man. A successful life needs both, excellence and timeliness. The *Guishen zhi ming* in contrast refers to a demonological explanation scheme. Successful life is granted by ghosts and spirits, and it is due to their inability or unwillingness that a correspondence between morality and fate is often not realized. Both texts refer to the historical precedents of Shun and Wu Zixu as representative of lucky (Shun) and unlucky (Wu Zixu) fates. The *Mengzi* does not address this problem in the same explicit discursive manner as these two texts. It discusses the same problem in regard to the positions of kings and of Confucius and proposes different explanative models for them. A ruler's position is partly determined by Heaven whereas the position of Confucius is entirely dependent first on

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[75] See for example 5A6, which begins with the continuation of the argument in 5A5 that Heaven decides who rules the world. The reason why Confucius never became a ruler, however, is not, as in the other cases, attributed to Heaven's decision but to the Son of Heaven not recommending him: "In order to rule the world, a common man must not only have the virtue of a Shun or a Yu [which Confucius had of course] but also the support of an emperor. Therefore, Confucius never ruled the world." 匹夫而有天下者，德必若舜、禹，而又有天子荐之者。故仲尼不有天下。 Based on the translation by Lau, *Mencius*, p. 145. In 7B18 the *Mengzi* refers to the famous story of Confucius being stranded with his disciples in the region of Chen and Cai, one of the frequently cited illustrations of Confucius failed life. *Mengzi* explains this situation again with the lack of support by the authorities in power: "Mengzi said, 'That the gentleman [Confucius] was in danger between Chen and Cai was because he had no connections to superiors at court.'" 孟子曰：君子之厄於陳蔡之閒，無上下之交也。

[76] See for example *Mengzi* 4A7 quoting Confucius: "Confucius said, 'Benevolence cannot be quantified. As a matter of fact, if the ruler of a state loves benevolence, he will be matchless in the world.'" 孔子曰：仁不可為眾也。夫國君好仁，天下無敵。Transl. Lau, 1970, 121. Or, using another Confucius quote in 2A1: "Confucius said, [Governmental] virtue spreads faster than an order transmitted through posting stations. At the present time, if a state of ten thousand chariots were to practise benevolent government, the people would rejoice as if they had been released from hanging by the heels. Just now is the time therefore when one will surely, with half effort, achieve twice as much as the ancients." 孔子曰：德之流行，速於置郵而傳命。 當今之時，萬乘之國行仁政，民之悅之，猶解倒懸也。故事半古之人，功必倍之，惟此時為然。

his own willingness to take office (this is an important issue in the *Mengzi*) and then mainly on the willingness of the rulers to employ him. Neither Heaven or timeliness nor ghosts or spirits are responsible for Confucius failure to take office.

IV *Xunzi* 荀子

The *Xunzi* is the first text that combines the two discourses of the *Qiongda yi shi* and the *Mengzi*. In "Of Honor and Disgrace" (榮辱), the *Xunzi* seems to propagate a straightforward correlation between virtue and success. Honorable men will enjoy benefits, disgraceful men will suffer harm. However, its usage of the term *chang* 常 (normally), leaves space for exceptions such as Confucius. In "Contra Twelve Philosophers" there is a clear sense that Confucius and other sages failed in their life, as attested by the claim "that even this kind of sages do not always gain a position of power is proven by the examples of Confucius and Zigong."[77] Counterexamples of sages who have attained power are, again, Shun and Yu. Although according to the *Xunzi* a great Ru will influence the whole world with his greatness, he is only able to do so if he is in office. If he fails to get an office (*qiong* 窮) he will be ridiculed by ordinary Ru, but he will obtain a great reputation because he never parts from the true Way although he lives as a poor man in reclusion.[78] The *Xunzi* shares the *Mengzi*'s assumption of a division between a virtuous life and great wealth, fame and official posts. It does, however, believe that virtuous conduct leads to respect and fame. The *Xunzi*'s explanation of Confucius' failure reveals striking parallels to the *Qiongda yi shi* when it ends its chapter "On Confucius": "Hence the gentleman bends in times that require bending and straightens out in times that require straightening."[79] In this and in other chapters we find a reflection of the Mencian idea of acting according to timely circumstances and of Confucius being the sage of timeliness. Yet timeliness, although a high Ruist ideal, does not explain success.

"Working Songs" (成相) contains a number of laments which, much in the same manner as the *Mengzi*, place the responsibility for success or failure of great Ru on the times

[77] 是聖人之不得埶者也，仲尼子弓是也。 Wang 1988, 97.
[78] See *Xunzi*, ch. 8, "Ru xiao 儒效," "The teachings of the Ru."
[79] 故君子時詘則詘，時伸則伸也。 Wang 1988, 113.

of good and bad government.[80] This, however, still does not explain why sages such as Shun and great Ru encountered propitious circumstances and Xunzi averse ones. In "Teachings of the Ru," the *Xunzi* gives an explanation that refers to a discourse that also appears in the *Qiongda yi shi* and echoes the other Mencian idea that a ruling position is pivotal for a sage to exert his influence and to change the world.[81] In contrast to the *Qiongda yi shi*, however, the *Xunzi* does not claim that the success depends in any way on Heaven. But we find an identical explanation in "The Warning Vessel on the Right" (宥坐) – in its presentation of the story of Confucius between Chen and Cai, a story that becomes a central element in the discourse about Confucius' failure in all the early texts that take part in this discourse.

> When Confucius once traveled southward toward Chu, he ran into difficulties in the territory between Chen and Cai. For seven days he and his disciples had not eaten cooked food, only herb soup without a single grain of rice so that the disciples all had a famished look. Zilu stepped forward and asked: "I have heard that Heaven responds with good fortune to those who do good and with disasters on those who do what is bad. As to our situation here and now you, Master, have accrued your virtue, accumulated acts of righteousness, and dwelt on the good, and have done so for a long time. Why, then, do you live in obscurity?" Confucius replied: "Yóu, you don't understand, I will tell you. Do you think that the wise are certain to be employed? But did not Prince Bigan have his heart cut out?![82] Do you think that the loyal are sure to be employed? But did not Guan Longfeng endure punishment?! Do you think that those who remonstrate are always followed? But was not Wu Zixu slashed apart and exposed outside the eastern gate of Gusu?! As a matter of fact, whether one encounters [the right opportunity] or not depends on the right time; whether one becomes a worthy or not depends on innate ability. Gentlemen who broaden their studies and make profound plans and yet do not meet with the right time are numerous. From this can be seen that those who have not met with the right time are legion. How should I be the only one? And, indeed, consider the orchid and angelica that grow deep in the forest: that there is no one [to smell them] does not mean that they are not fragrant. The learning of the gentleman is not undertaken for the sake of

[80] "Yao conferred [the empire] on an able man, and Shun encountered the right times. He elevated the worthy and promoted the virtuous, so the world was well ordered. But even if a man is a worthy or a sage, if he does not encounter the right times, who will recognize him?" 堯授能，舜遇時，尚賢推德天下治。雖有聖賢，適不遇世，孰知之？Wang 1988, 462. "Alas! Who am I that I alone do not encounter the right times in this disordered age!" 嗟！我何人，獨不遇時當亂世！Wang 1988, 467.

[81] "Zaofu was the best charioteer in the world, but without a chariot and a team of horses, he would have had nothing to make his abilities manifest. Yi was the best archer in the world, but without bow and arrows, he would have had nothing to make his skill known. A great Ru is good at adjusting and uniting the world, but without even so little as a hundred square *li* of territory, he has nothing to show his merits."
造父者, 天下之善御者也，無輿馬 則無所見其能。
羿者, 天下之善射者也，無弓矢 則無所見其巧。
大儒者, 善調一天下者也，無百里之地, 則無所見其功。Wang 1988, 137. The example of the charioteer Zaofu seems to carry a different connotation in the *Qiongda yi shi* in that it actually identifies the great Ru not with Zaofu but with his horse. In both cases, however, actualization of the hidden potential of each of the parts of the team is dependent on the other part.

[82] The *Xunzi* refers to this event again in one of its *fu*-poems on the disordered world, in which it states that since antiquity it has been a constant rule that things turn around after 1000 years (千歲必反，古之常也). Cf. ch. 26.6, Wang 1988, 482.

> a success [in his career], but so that if he fails he will not be beset with hardship, that in times of grief his sense of purpose will not diminish, and that in regard to knowing fortune and misfortune, ends and beginnings, his heart will not suffer illusions. In fact, whether one is worthy or not depends on innate ability, whether one acts or not depends on the man, whether one encounters [favorable circumstance] or not depends on the right time; whether one lives or dies depends on fate. Now, if there is the right person but he does not meet with the right time then even though he is worthy, would he be able to put his worthiness into practice? Yet if he should chance to meet with the right time, what difficulty will there be! Therefore the gentleman studies broadly, develops profound plans, cultivates himself and gives his utmost to await his right time.[83]

I have quoted the passage in full because it contains so many elements that are relevant to our analysis and because the numerous verbatim parallels with the *Qiongda yi shi* are striking.[84] The *Xunzi* propounds three arguments in this story. First, it continues the earlier explanations of the *Mengzi* that the gentleman studies not for worldly comfort but for inner virtues and that he remains firm and steady in times of hardship. Second, in the final passage it even takes the experience of hardship as a condition for a gentleman to broaden his horizon and deepen his thoughts. It thereby concludes with a re-definition of what real success actually means for a gentleman. Third, the *Xunzi* introduces a new discourse from the following first lines of the *Qiongda yi shi*: "When there is the right man, but there are not the right times, then even if he is worthy, he will not be able to put his worhiness into action. However, if there were the right times, what difficulties would there be?"[85] Accordingly, it is the meeting of the right time that decides over worldly success, official position, fame and wealth (although the topic of official posts is not explicitly mentioned here). Time, however, is not connected to Heaven in the *Xunzi*. This becomes quite explicit when we look at the sentence "whether one encounters [the right opportunity] or not depends on *Heaven*" (遇不遇者，天也) of the *Qiongda yi shi* that is rendered as "whether one encounters [the right opportunity] or not depends on the right *time*" (遇不遇者，時也) in the *Xunzi*. Time is one among four factors that decide upon a good life: innate ability,[86] personal engagement,[87] an encounter with the right time,[88] and

[83] Based on the translation by Knoblock 1994, 249–250; see also Makeham 1998, 79–80; Wang 1988, 526–527.
[84] This has been pointed out by the editors of the *Qiongda yi shi* and summarized by Paul A. Goldin: "The lesson recorded in 'Qiongda yi shi' is not situated between Chen and Cai—nor is it even attributed to Confucius—but the language and argument contain striking echoes of Xunzi's account. […] These and other similarities indicate that if the account in the *Xunzi* is not modelled after 'Qiongda yi shi,' the two must share a common source or sources. Recalling that 'Qiongda yi shi' never refers to Confucius's difficulties between Chen and Cai, perhaps we may say that Xunzi was the first writer to combine this teaching about timeliness with the famous legend that we know from *Analects* 15.2—where, as we have seen, the figure of Confucius gives a very different response to Zilu." Goldin 2000, 134–135.
[85] 有其人, 無其世, 雖賢弗行矣。苟有其世, 何難之有哉？
[86] 賢不肖者，材也。
[87] 為不為者，人也。
[88] 遇不遇者，時也。

existential fate.[89] Yet, time is more powerful than worthiness, it is the basic condition for any successful action. It is this last order of things (time before worthiness) with which the text of the *Qiongda yi shi* starts and which is also reflected in the *Xunzi*. Taking up this order and the whole new topic of timeliness into its discussion of Confucius, the *Xunzi* seems to insert the discourse of timeliness from the *Qiongda yi shi*.

If we compare what the *Xunzi* takes from the *Qiongda yi shi* with what the *Shuoyuan* takes from it in its "Za yan" 雜言 chapter, it appears that in the *Xunzi* exactly the remaining rest of the *Qiongda yi shi* text is left out that is transmitted almost in its entirety in the *Shuoyuan* and *Hanshi waizhuan* 7.6 (the two versions are nearly identical). The same is true for the *Kongzi jiayu* "Zai e" 在厄 version of the story which only shares the orchid passage with the *Qiongda yi shi*. The *Kongzi jiayu* version in turn includes a passage that is not transmitted in any of the other extant forms of this story. It is, however, transmitted as a second version of this story (of Confucius between Chen and Cai), the earliest version of which can be found in the *Zhuangzi* (ch. "Rang wang" 讓王), in the *Fengsu tongyi* (nearly identical with *Zhuangzi*), and also, as second versions of the story, in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Shuoyuan* and *Kongzi jiayu*.[90]

The conclusion of the *Xunzi* accords with that of the *Zhuangzi*, "the gentleman studies broadly, develops profound plans, cultivates himself and gives his utmost to await his right time." Turning back to the own person is exactly what the *Qiongda yi shi* also proposed as a solution to a deeper philosophical problem: sober historical and empirical observations had clearly revealed that the ideological assumptions of a correspondence between man's virtue and his success so strongly propagated by the Early Zhou were no longer tenable.

The *Xunzi*, though upholding the *Mengzi*'s veneration for Confucius as a sage, concedes that Confucius was not able to put his sageliness into practice. He introduces the notion of timeliness into the Confucian discourse on success which is neither controlled by

[89] 死生者，命也。

[90] In this second version of the story Confucius sings and plays the Qin-zither as expression of his cheerful and unworried mind. The disciples do not think that this is appropriate and are then disabused by Confucius on the fact that this is the appropriate behaviour of a gentleman in such a situation. The *Zhuangzi* and *Kongzi jiayu* versions of the first story include a short passage of this second story, and the *Shuoyuan* and *Hanshi waizhuan* versions of the first story also include two sentences which explain that the Master in this situation of distress was continuing to read the classics and practice the rituals. Exactly these sentences are missing in the *Xunzi* version, which therefore does not include any traces of this second story and thus does not include the other kind of explanation that goes with this second story, namely denying that there is any harm at all: "Confucius said: 'What are you talking about? If the gentleman is successful in the Way, that is what is meant by [real] success. Failure of the Way is what is meant by [real] failure. (note: the *Xunzi* uses the opposing terms *qiong* 窮 and *tong* 通 for failure and success, instead of *qiong* 窮 and *da* 達 which the *Qiongda yi shi* uses) As to our case I embrace the Way of benevolence and righteousness to face the disasters of our disordered age. How can that be considered a failure?'" 孔子曰：「是何言也！君子通於道之謂通，窮於道之謂窮。今丘抱仁義之道以遭亂世之患，其何窮之為！ *Zhuangzi* "Rang wang" in: Wang 1987: 257.

man nor by Heaven. The sage has to turn back to himself and await the right time to be able to change the world.

V *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋

The *Lüshi chunqiu*, the most complex work on timing in the Pre-Qin era, continues the discourse of the *Xunzi* that had combined the *Qiongda yi shi* and the *Mengzi*. But the focus of the respective *Lüshi chunqiu* passages lies mainly on the question of how far humans are able to control the success of their actions, how much of their success is attributable to their own wisdom or efforts, how much to Heaven and how much to other external factors.

In line with the *Qiongda yi shi* and the *Xunzi*, chapter 14.3 of the *Lüshi chunqiu* argues that the accomplishment of a great success depends on both, the right time and the worthiness of those who accomplish the action. It is Heaven that gives the opportunity, but it is man who seizes it.[91] Sages have an insight into when the accomplishment of a certain action will be realistic or most effective and therefore await the right time for their respective actions. Chapter 14.5.1 continues this train of thought with a stronger focus on the impact of the favorable circumstance provided by Heaven.

14.6 combines both sides in a strictly separated symmetrical presentation of examples explaining exactly what the Heavenly (天也) and the human (人也) contributions to success are. With numerous intertextual links the chapter connects directly back to our previous discussion of the *Qiongda yi shi* parts in the *Xunzi* and the two different stories of Confucius in the border region of Chen and Cai (using the same story that we find also in the "Rang wang" chapter of the *Zhuangzi* with some minor differences in wording).[92]

As the title "Yuhe" 遇合 indicates, 14.7 deals with "encounter" and "concord." The chapter starts with its central theme: "All [successful] 'encounter' implies 'concord.' When times do not 'concord,' one must wait for it to 'concord' and only become active afterwards."[93] Confucius is then presented as an example of someone who met more than eighty lords and yet was only able to reach the position of minister of crime in Lu. The chapter thus reflects a new problem in the discourse of success. There is no longer a

[91] "Heaven will not give him an opportunity twice, time will not remain right for long, someone who is skilled does not do his work twice, handling affairs lies in being appropriate in time," 天不再與，時不久留，能不兩工，事在當之。 Chen 1990, 769; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 315; Wilhelm 1979; 186–187.

[92] Instead of the contrastive pair *qiong—tong* 窮—通, for example, the text uses the pair *qiong—da* 窮—達, like the *Qiongda yi shi*.

[93] 凡遇，合也。時不合，必待合而後行。Chen 1990, 815; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 327; Wilhelm 1979, 197.

consensus on what exactly a successful "encounter" is. Obviously, not any opportunity that provides a gentleman with the chance to realize his own virtues can count as a successful "encounter." An encounter needs to "concord" (*he* 合) with the favorite circumstance of a good ruler in order to be successful. The chapter emphasizes that the gentleman has to critically examine his own capabilities before he accepts the huge responsibility that comes with an office. Since rulers are not wise enough to discern a sage from an ordinary man, since it is therefore possible that ordinary men take high positions, and since the consequences of bad rule are devastating, a gentleman has to decide by himself whether he is suited to an office or not. We have discussed the importance of the topic of whether and when a gentleman should seek office in the *Mengzi*. Yet however, in discussing the same theme, the *Lüshi chunqiu* here shifts attention from the focus on the lack of the ruler's *morality* to the problem that most rulers even lack the *basic intellectual qualification* to choose the right people. This topic presents the doubts regarding encounters in a new and more focused perspective. The morality of a ruler (which can no longer be assumed) can no longer serve as a benchmark for the definition of a real encounter, nor is it any longer relevant for the discussion about whether, when and why to take an office.[94] Even if an encounter appears to be pleasing for both sides this does not necessarily mean that it is also truly in concord as numerous historical precedents in this chapter demonstrate in which perfectly good and honorable people met misfortune due to wrong personal constellations, to misunderstandings and to the lack of the right "concord."[95]

14.8 moves this discourse further into a broader philosophical field. Not only people's constellations are unreliable, but, more generally, as the first sentence states, "External things cannot be dealt with in any certain way" 外物不可必.[96] The outer world itself is utterly unreliable and humans have no way of controlling the outcomes of their actions. There is no general rule or solution for one's own personal situation in the external world. There is no guarantee that any theory is applicable or any method assuredly works. Everything depends on contexts that cannot be known or controlled. Whether an encounter will lead to success or not is unpredictable. The crucial problem that is illustrated by a number of stories in this

[94] "Among the rulers of the present age those who are capable of understanding people who lead argumentative discourses are very few. How can they then get people who are not shallow from those whom they 'encounter'?" 世主之能識論議者寡，所遇惡得不苟？Chen 1990, 815; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 328; Wilhelm 1979, 198 (both translations miss the point).

[95] "This is the reason why it is said: 'There are no constant principles in "encounter" and "concord." Pleasing/persuading others is merely a matter of behaving compliantly.'" 故曰：遇合也無常。說，適然也。 Chen 1990, 816; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 329; Wilhelm 1979, 198.

[96] Chen 1990, 828, ; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 331; Wilhelm 1979, 200.

chapter[97] is given expression in the following conclusion: "There is no method for persuasions like this and yet they work. How can external things then be dealt with in any certain way?"[98] The chapter ends with a conclusion that recommends that in view of the unreliability of the outer world one should turn to oneself.[99]

This expression of extreme mistrust and anxiety in regard to the outer world might reflect some aspects of late Warring States period psychology. It also shows the ending point of a discourse that had started quite confidently with assumptions about golden times that had existed and would eventually return and could therefore be awaited with the firm belief that powerful inner virtues would have a transformative effect on the outer world. These last discussions, in contrast, reflect the loss of any confidence in the outer world and in the efficacy of Confucian morality. They suggest instead an inward turn to the only reliable point that can be trusted, the personal self. What started as a strict separation of Heaven and man and therefore resulted in the advice to turn back to oneself (*fan ji* 反己) in the *Qiongda yi shi* has now developed into a strict separation between self and others and leads to a similar advice to focus on that which is certain in oneself (*bi zai ji* 必在己) as the only method to lead a good and safe life in this world.

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[97] The following story shows very drastically how little any human efforts can prepare one for or protect one against external circumstances. "Shan Bao was fond of [life-prolonging] techniques. He detached himself from the vulgar, gave up the realm of the dusty world, did not eat grains nor fruit, did not wear comfortable and warm clothes, lived in a rock cave in the mountain forests – all in order to live out his full life span. Before he had used up his allotted years however, he was eaten by a tiger." 單豹好術。離俗棄塵，不食穀實，不衣芮溫，身處山林巖堀，以全其生。不盡其年，而虎食之。 Chen 1990, 829–830; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 334; Wilhelm 1979, 203.
Another story shows how little even education can help to solve problems: "Confucius was resting from his travels when his horse got away and ate the grain of another man. The uncouth farmer captured the horse. Zigong asked that he be allowed to go and persuade the man [to return it]. Zigong used up all his fine phrases, but the uncouth farmer would not listen. A provincial who had begun his studies with Confucius said: 'Please allow me to go and persuade him.' He thereupon went and said to the uncouth farmer: 'You, sir, don't plow at the Eastern Sea and I don't plow at the Western Sea. So how could my horse not eat your grain?' The uncouth farmer was very pleased and replied: 'All persuasions should be as logical as this. How could anyone [talk] like that other man?' He released the horse and handed it over to him." 孔子行道而息，馬逸，食人之稼，野人取其馬。子貢請往說之，畢辭，野人不聽。有鄙人始事孔子者曰：請往說之，因謂野人曰：『子不耕於東海，吾不耕於西海也，吾馬何得不食子之禾？』其野人大說，相謂曰：『說亦皆如此其辯也，獨如嚮之人？』解馬而與之。 Chen 1990, 830; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 335; Wilhelm 1979, 203–204.
[98] 說如此其無方也而猶行，外物豈可必哉？Chen 1990, 830; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 335; Wilhelm 1979, 204.
[99] "In his personal conduct, the gentleman respects others, but is not necessarily respected by others. He loves others, but is not necessarily loved by others. To respect and love others is due to oneself. Being respected and loved is due to others. The gentleman ensures what is due to him, he does not ensure what is due to others. If he ensures what is due to him then there is nothing which he does not encounter." 君子之自行也，敬人而不必見敬，愛人而不必見愛。敬愛人者，己也；見敬愛者，人也。君子必在己者，不必在人者也，必在己無不遇矣。 Chen 1990, 830; Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 335; Wilhelm 1979, 204.

VI *Lunyu* 論語?

To locate the *Lunyu* in this discourse, we need to finally analyze how a successful life is defined in the *Lunyu* and how Confucius' life is portrayed, evaluated and explained.

Confucius in the *Lunyu* does not discuss Heaven. Like in the *Qiongda yi shi*, the Heavenly and human realm seem to be regarded as two separate things. Confucius therefore merely engages with the human side of virtuous action, *de xing* 德行, and focus on the self, *fan ji* 反己, to use expressions from the *Qiongda yi shi*. The questions why Confucius is not successful in his political career and how a gentleman should behave when not recognized, however, occupy the minds of his students (and also his own)[100] throughout the *Lunyu* and obviously require an explanation. I take this as a clear indication that a correlation between worthiness and success in a political career was expected in the *Lunyu* context(s). The *Lunyu* presents this repeatedly as a problem but does not develop a coherent position. In one passage in *Lunyu* 14.5 which perhaps comes nearest to the discourse on the relation between human action and successful fate as discussed in the texts above, Confucius appreciates the question but doesn't give an answer.

> 南宮适問於孔子曰：「羿善射，奡盪舟，俱不得其死然；禹稷躬稼，而有天下。」夫子不答，南宮适出。子曰：「君子哉若人！尚德哉若人！」
> Nangong Kuo asked Confucius and said: "Yi was good at archery and Ao was rocking boats, yet both did not meet their natural deaths. Yu and [Hou] Ji bended down to sow grain and yet they came to rule over the world." Confucius did not respond. After Nangong Kuo had left he said: "A gentleman indeed is this man! High virtue indeed has this man!"

The *Lunyu* rather focuses on the relationship between the ideal of a gentleman (*junzi* 君子), an official position (*wei* 位, *shi* 試, *shi* 士, *shi* 仕, *wei zheng* 為政) and recognition (*zhi* 知) or fame (*ming* 名, *wen* 聞). The question of this relationship is touched upon from different perspectives that provide five different approaches to answer this question.

The first discusses the relation between a successful gentleman and recognition (and position).[101] This discussion certainly belongs to the oldest strata of the *Lunyu* because we find exactly this theme already in the *Dizi wen* manuscript of the Shanghai Museum Collection dated around 300 BCE which includes the acclamation: "The Master sighed and

[100] *Lunyu* 1.1, 4.14, 8.1, 14.30, 14.35, 15.19.
[101] Even though Confucius appears to be rather indifferent to this problem he nevertheless constantly addresses this topic throughout the *Lunyu*.

said: ‘Oh! Nobody recognizes me!’” 子嘆曰: 烏!莫我知也夫![102] The *Lunyu* starts (1.1) with a passage mentioning exactly this topic:

> 子曰：「學而時習之，不亦說乎？有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎？」
> The Master said: “To study and at due times to put it into practice, is this not a pleasure? To have friends coming from afar, is this not a joy? Not being indignant when people do not recognize oneself, is this not a gentleman?”

Lunyu 4.14 constructs a parellelism between being troubled that nobody recognizes oneself and between being troubled that one has no official position.

> 子曰：「不患無位，患所以立；不患莫己知，求為可知也。」
> The Master said: “Don’t be troubled that you have no official position, be troubled about the means by which you establish yourself; don’t be troubled that nobody recognizes you, seek what is worth to be recognized.”

A successful gentleman does not strive for the recognition of others but aims at what makes others recognize him.

The second is a discussion on how success and fame are related. A very short passage in *Lunyu* 15.20 states that a gentleman should be keen to build up a reputation:

> 子曰：「君子疾沒世而名不稱焉。」
> The Mater said: “A gentleman is concerned that when he departs from the world his name is not praised.”

This seems to contradict the first discussion on recognition (of which we find another passage right in the saying before *Lunyu* 15.20). Yet, *Lunyu* 16.12 could be read as direct answer to this question:

> 齊景公有馬千駟，死之日，民無德而稱焉。伯夷叔齊餓于首陽之下，民到于今稱之。其斯之謂與？
> Lord Jing from Qi possessed one thousand teams of horses, yet on the day he died, the people had no virtue to praise him for. Bo Yi and Shu Qi starved at Mount Shouyang, yet the people praise them down to the present day. Isn’t this what it is saying?

This passage makes clear that the name and fame of a gentleman does not rest on material goods but on moral merits. We find a similar agumentation in *Lunyu* 12.20 in a discussion on the term *da* 達, one of the central conceptual terms in the *Qiongda yi shi* 窮達以時.

[102] *Dizi wen* 2005: 279, 269 (strips 20, 4). Hunter notes that this precise phrase is also found in other early texts (such as the *Laozi or the* “Li sao” **離騷**) as well, Hunter 2012: 230, see the table in Appendix 3:H, 399–400.

子張問：「士何如斯可謂之達矣？」子曰：「何哉，爾所謂達者？」子張對曰：「在邦必聞，在家必聞。」子曰：「是聞也，非達也。夫達也者，質直而好義，察言而觀色，慮以下人。在邦必達，在家必達。夫聞也者，色取仁而行違，居之不疑。在邦必聞，在家必聞。」
Zizhang asked: "How should a *shi*-scholar be so that he can be called successful?" The Master said: "What then would you consider as successful? Zizhang replied: One who is certain to be heard no matter whether he is employed at the royal court or at a great officials' house." The Master said: "This is being heard, not being successful. As a matter of fact, someone who is successful presents himself straight and is fond of righteousness, he examines what others say and observes their appearance, and he is thoughtful of deferring to others. He then is certain to be successfull no matter whether he is employed at the royal court or at a great officials' house. In general contrast, someone who is being heard just puts on an air of benevolence while acting contrary to it, and he just abides by this without any doubt. He then is certain to be heard no matter whether he is employed at the royal court or at a great officials' house."

Confucius in this passage is eager to point out the difference between success and fame. In *Lunyu* 15.2 the famous story of Confucius' distress between Chen and Cai is used to discuss the other side of the 窮達 opposition. In this passage Zilu asks the Master the interesting question whether it is at all possible for a gentleman to fail (*qiong* 窮):

在陳絕糧，從者病，莫能興。子路慍見曰：「君子亦有窮乎？」子曰：「君子固窮，小人窮斯濫矣。」
When they were in difficulties between Chen and Cai they ran out of grain and the disciples became so weak that none of them was able to stand up. Zilu indignantly came to see the Master and said: "Does failure actually ever exist for a gentleman?" The Master said: "A gentleman is steadfast when he fails, a petty man in such circumstances lets himself go."

The Master's response to Zilu's desperate question is thus negative. Failure and gentleman can go together, but if the gentleman is steadfast then he doesn't fail to be a gentleman, failures of the sort encountered between Chen and Cai thus remain outer problems that do not affect the gentleman as gentleman. The basic argument in all these passages runs along the lines of the distinctions between self-others and inner-outer that we also found in the *Mengzi*. Even the famous story of Confucius' distress between Chen and Cai is explained within the oppositional pattern of harsh external circumstances that, however, should be seen as a challenge for the inner virtues by a gentleman. Material wealth, skills, fame and position are the main issues that are (and obviously need to be) disparaged by contrasting them with the real values that a gentleman strives for: *dao* 道, *de* 德, *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *gu* 固 etc. These divisions into material wealth, worldly success, office, power etc vs. Ruist values in the *Lunyu* become even more apparent in the second ten chapters of the *Lunyu* where Confucius

is not intending to secure office[103] and is somehow closer to the way Confucius is depicted in the *Zhuangzi* than in his representations in *Mengzi* and *Xunzi*, where he appears eager to seek office.[104] Yet, there is no coherent terminology nor a clear concept. A reputation can be good if it is based on moral achievements, and this is what one should strive for, it is bad, however, when it is merely based on wealth, power or performance, this should be avoided.

The third question that relates to the broader discourse on success is whether an official position is important and should be gained to exert a moral impact on the world.[105] In some passages of the *Lunyu* this discussion is led in reference to Confucius' not holding an office, an issue that is discussed in different ways.

> 或謂孔子曰：「子奚不為政？」子曰：「《書》云：『孝乎惟孝、友于兄弟，施於有政。』是亦為政，奚其為為政？」
> Someone asked Kongzi: "Why don't you take an active role in governance?" The Master said: "*The Book of Documents* says: 'Filial piety, just filial piety [towards your parents] and friendliness towards your brothers, extend this to the realm of governance.' This is also taking an active role in governance, why should this only relate to officially playing an active role in governance?"[106]

Confucius in this passage seems to imply that one can have the same impact on the world when following moral standards as when occupying an official position. *Lunyu* 8.14 (with its parallel in 14.26), however, seems to contradict this view:

> 子曰：「不在其位，不謀其政。」
> The Master said: "If one does not occupy the appropriate official position then one should not devise its governance."[107]

The passage indicates that there are certain political actions that should only be executed when holding the appropriate post in government. *Lunyu* 5.6 shows that office should not be taken for any sake, and *Lunyu* 15.7 reflects the discussion in the *Mengzi* (further developed in the *Lüshi chunqiu*) under what circumstances one should engage in government.

A fourth and fifth sets of sayings that relate to success are two kinds of reflections on Confucius' success. The fourth depicts him as an employee, not of a worldly ruler but of

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[103] Makeham 1998, 92–93.
[104] Makeham 1998, 90–91. However, there is constant frustration and lament in the *Lunyu* which in *Zhuangzi* is replaced by him singing and being joyful so that even his disciples misunderstand him (chap. Rang wang).
[105] *Lunyu* 2.21, 3.24, 4.14, 4.26, 5.6, 15.7, 17.1, 18.5, 18.7.
[106] Cf. *Lunyu* 2.21.
[107] The parallel passage in *Lunyu* 14.26 has one more sentence: 曾子曰：「君子思不出其位。」 Zengzi said: 'The gentleman's thinking does not go beyond his own particular position.' This sentence in turn has a parallel in the *xiang* 象 commentary of the *Zhouyi* to hexagram "liang" 艮.

Heaven who has bestowed him with a task that lies beyond that of any common office holders.

> 子畏於匡。曰：「文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也；天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予何？」
> When the Master was surrounded in Kuang he said: As King Wen has long passed away aren't the accomplished patterns of order still here with us? If Heaven was about to destroy these patterns then those remaining after his death would not have gained access to these patterns, if, however, Heaven is not yet destroying these patterns how would the people of Kuang then deal with me?"[108]

Despite all the doubts and sorrows of Confucius displayed in the *Lunyu* (see part one above) a passage like this expresses a self-confidence that lies beyond all these and renders the problem of worldly success and recognition somehow obsolete. Yet, a certain tension remains and one wonders why Confucius then keeps on mentioning that he is not recognized.

> 子曰：「莫我知也夫！」子貢曰：「何為其莫知子也？」子曰：「不怨天，不尤人。下學而上達。知我者，其天乎！」
> The Master said: "Nobody recognizes me!" Zigong said: "What do you do with nobody recognizing you Master?" The Master said: "I don't bear a grudge against Heaven and do not blame other people, instead I study the human affairs below and thereby reach up to Heaven. The one who knows me, it is Heaven!"[109]

Other passages give expression to this same view from the perspective of others.

> 儀封人請見。曰：「君子之至於斯也，吾未嘗不得見也。」從者見之。出曰：「二三子，何患於喪乎？天下之無道也久矣，天將以夫子為木鐸。」
> A border official from Yi asked to meet Confucius and said: "I managed to meet every single gentleman who arrived at this place." Confucius' followers thereupon arranged a meeting with him. When he left he said: "why are you guys distressed upon the general decline?[110] The world has been without the right Way for a long while, but Heaven is about to use Confucius as his alarm bell."[111]

This passage is reminiscent of *Lunyu* 9.5. Both envision Confucius in times of disorder not as a government official but as an "official" employed by Heaven and fulfilling a special kind of duty. Being in a position above worldly office, Confucius' teaching is presented as being of much greater importance and exerting a much greater impact for the order in the world than

[108] *Lunyu* 9.5.
[109] *Lunyu* 14.35.
[110] Most commentators and translators interpret *sang* 喪 as a loss of position. Although this reading would support my analysis much better I think it makes more sense to read it in the context of *Lunyu* 9.5 as a state of general decline of the patterns of order (喪斯文).
[111] *Lunyu* 3.24.

any common official position is able to. These passages therefore respond in their own way to the same question why Confucius did not hold an office.

A fifth way to present the theme is through the voice of people outside of Confucius' circle (like the preceding passage from *Lunyu* 3.24).[112] In later chapters the theme has a slightly different tinge. It appears as a topic that is so much associated with Confucius that all kinds of people address it either urging Confucius to take office (17.1) or warning him to do so (18.5) or condemning him and his disciples for doing no work (18.7).

> […]「懷其寶而迷其邦，可謂仁乎？」曰：「不可。」「好從事而亟失時，可謂知乎？」曰：「不可。」「日月逝矣，歲不我與。」孔子曰：「諾。吾將仕矣。」
> […] "Can someone be called benevolent who holds his moral treasure hidden and lets his state go astray?" Confucius said: "One can't." "Can someone be called wise who is fond of regulating affairs but constantly misses the right time to do so?" Confucius said: "One can't." "Days and months are passing by, the years are not with us." Confucius said: "Right, I will get employed!"[113]

Conclusion

True success in the *Lunyu* is always bound to morality. Neither recognition nor fame nor a position can match the inner success of moral accomplishment. If Confucius fails in these exterior respects it does not matter because he succeeds in those superior respects that define a gentleman. As to his (and any true gentleman's) contribution to the overall moral order, it transcends and outreaches the purely worldly impact of governance on the social order by securing the continuity of the moral and ritual order of the ancient wise kings that is directly linked to the Heavenly order.

Like in the depiction of Confucius' knowledge the *Lunyu* presents a quite coherent image of Confucius in its depiction of his worldly failure yet moral success. It does not, however, connect to any of the discourses that we find in the other early texts.

Confucius is neither depicted as someone who knows exactly when to act in a timely manner nor is he waiting for the right times (this seems to start with the last *Gongyang* commentary to Lord Ai 14) like in the *Qiongda yi shi*. There are no references to timeliness or particular good or bad times.[114] We do find elements of fatalism in the *Lunyu* where Confucius expresses his belief in the dependence of his own fate on the actions of Heaven. This fatalistic notion of timeliness occurs sometimes in the sense that his time has come or

[112] *Lunyu* 3.24, 17.1, 18.5, 18.7.
[113] *Lunyu* 17.1.
[114] The term *ming* 命 in *Lunyu* 14.36 is sometimes interpreted in this way, but could equally well, and in my view more convincingly, refer to human orders.

has not yet come or, like in 9.22, with a slight doubt whether "There are, are there not, sprouts that do not produce blossoms and blossoms that do not produce fruits?"[115] The *Mozi* therefore charges Confucianism with being 'fatalistic.'[116] Never do we find, however, any more systematic reflection on this, Heavenly time is nowhere in the *Lunyu* used in a conceptual sense as in the *Qiongda yi shi*. Moreover, the *Lunyu* does not refer to the same famous historical precedents that are central to this particular discourse. Wu Zixu is not mentioned once in the *Lunyu*, Shun is never associated with the question of success or fate. Yet, the terms *qiong* and *da* are used in a similar way as in the *Qiongda yi shi* and in the *Xunzi* as expressions of success and failure in a human's life.

There are no references to ghosts and spirits' impact on human fate like in the *Guishen zhi ming*.

The Mencian ideas that incapable rulers are responsible for Confucius' failure to take office, or that Confucius appeared according to a 500 years cycle of sages appearing in the world are all absent in the *Lunyu*. Two *Lunyu* concepts of success do have a parallel in the *Mengzi*. First is the fundamental and most coherent idea in the *Lunyu* that success and failure have to be measured by inner moral standards and not by external criteria such as recognition, fame, or office. Second is the idea that Confucius cautiously weighed up under what conditions to take office. *Lunyu* 8.13 is particular trenchant in that matter. It does not only state that no post should be taken in times of disorder but that by the same token one should have a position and be successful in times when the Way prevails.[117] If we relate these contrastive patterns to the numerous expressions of grievance against the declining world in the *Lunyu* they appear as yet another explanation of why the very fact that Confucius never gained an official post is not an indication of his failure but rather a proof of his true sageliness. Timeliness is brought into this discussion in the *Lunyu* only insofar as an office should be taken only in times of good government whereas one should hide (or even resist) in bad times.[118]

We also do not find any doubt in the belief that humans are able to (at least partly) control success, a doubt that is so clearly expressed in the *Lüshi chunqiu*. The role and quality of encounters is nowhwere discussed, instead, and in clear opposition to the *Lüshi chunqiu*

[115] See also *Lunyu* 14.36.
[116] Cf. Eno 2005.
[117] "The Master said, 'Be sincere in your trustworthiness and be passionate in your learning, and abide to the death in the good way. Do not enter a state that is in peril; don't stay in a disordered state. Show yourself when the Way prevails in the world, but hide yourself when it does not. It is shameful to be poor and humble when the Way prevails in the state, it is shameful to be rich and noble when it does not.'"
子曰:「篤信好學，守死善道。危邦不人，亂邦不居，天下有道則見，無道則隱。 邦有道，貧且賤焉，恥也，邦無道，富且貴焉，恥也。」
[118] *Lunyu* 5.2.

discourses, the *Lunyu* expresses full confidence that a gentleman's actions do have a reliable impact on the outer world and that certain methods can be applied to secure social and moral order.

The fourth way to deal with the problem of success, the idea that Confucius fulfills a Heavenly task that lies beyond all worldly worries did not appear in any of the other early pre-Qin texts. It seems to stand in stark contrast to the passages in which Confucius describes himself as someone who simply "learns without tiring and teaches others without wearying" 學而不厭，誨人不倦,[119] that emphasize that Confucius does not see himself as a sage and in which his weaknesses are highlighted.

VII Conclusion

As in so many other ancient cultures,[120] the observation that moral worthiness is not the only decisive factor that leads to a successful life stimulated a debate in early China on the question which other factors play a role in achieving success (and which factors other than moral action could play a role in avoiding harm). We have looked at some early textual witnesses of this discourse and have reconstructed some stages of a discourse that starts from two different approaches to the problem.

Based on a number of historical precedences regarding the success of famous worthies the *Qiongda yi shi* introduced timely encounters with rulers as a second decisive factor besides the worthiness of the historical individuals. The two instances of Heaven and man were identified as the key factors which in strict separation and entirely independently of each other both equally contributed to the success in life. Taking Confucius as the historical example by reference to which the relation between moral worthiness and successful life had to be defined, the *Mengzi* identified worthiness with success and therefore had to distinguish inner moral success as the true and ultimate success from an inferior outer success of fame, wealth and official posts. He neither used Heaven nor timely encounter as models to explain Confucius'failure. His not taking office in bad governments was interpreted as an act of sageliness. The *Xunzi*, much more pessimistic about the prospect to change the bad times, combined these two approaches and introduced timeliness into the Confucian discourse as the decisive factor explaining why Confucius was not successful in implementing his sageliness

[119] *Lunyu* 7.2, 7.34. See for the parallels in *Mengzi* and *Lüshi chunqiu* Hunter 2012: 241.
[120] Cf., for example, the *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* (also called the *Babylonian Job*, for a discussion see Müller 1978), or *The Dispute between a man and his Ba* (for a discussion see Assmann 1990).

to restore order by means of an official post. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* develops the discourse several steps further by questioning and relativizing basic notions of the discourse such as 'timeliness' and 'encounter.' It ends by finally entirely giving up any belief even in the notions of good and bad times or anything outside of the inner self that could be relied upon to guarantee success. Although the assumptions and arguments vary considerably in the discourses analyzed above, the answers seem always to point back to the cultivation of the self as the most basic and consistent doctrinal element. The place of the self is constructed by contrasts: Heaven is above and humans below, wealth, power, and fame are outside and morality is inside. A steady pattern of here and there, inside and outside, Heaven and humans, self and other that we find in one way or the other in each of the texts carries the strong argument that we should not care too much about these external things and should instead care about ourselves for the sake of the Heavenly order of the world.

Now, where do we place the *Lunyu* in the historical development of this discourse on success and failure?

Dating

The *Lunyu* addresses the problem of the correspondence between moral accomplishments and successful life that is discussed throughout the texts that we have analyzed. It thus can be regarded as a player in the history of this problem. Continuous and changing elements in this history could be established for the *Qiongda yi shi*, the *Mengzi*, the *Xunzi* and the *Lüshi chunqiu*. As argued in the conclusion above, the *Qiongda yi shi* and the *Mengzi* start two different discourses on the same problem that are then combined in the *Xunzi* and further developed in the *Lüshi chunqiu*.

It is difficult to draw straight lines between these stages of the discourse which in our narrative of the development of this discourse in the conclusion above seem to follow quite neatly upon each other because we do not know how many, and what kind of, discursive elements come in between these stages and how exactly they relate to each other.[121]

Addressing the same kind of problem, the *Lunyu* provides a number of reflections on the theme of success from different angles. But it only shares two of the elements found in the other texts, and these it shares with the *Mengzi* (and with the *Xunzi* in so far as the *Xunzi* continues the Mencian discourse). One is the basic division of success and failure into interior

[121] The *San de* 三德 manuscript from the Shanghai Museum Collection could for example combine some aspects of the concept of timeliness as employed in the *Qiongda yi shi* and some aspects of the power of ghosts and spirits as envisioned in the *Guishen zhi ming*, a text that otherwise can not be connected to any of the analyzed discourses.

and exterior realms and the other is the precept that one should only take office in times when circumstances and means are morally appropriate. However, no change is visible that could indicate a historical shift. On this basis alone, the *Lunyu* could therefore be positioned before, between or after the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*. It does not share other elements with the above analyzed texts on the problem of success that could be better dated, such as, for example, the role Heaven or man plays in turning human life towards success or failure. Finally, the element that is *Lunyu* specific, the higher calling of Confucius by Heaven, can not be found in any of the other texts and therefore also does not indicate a date of the text.

Conclusion

In our methodological reflections at the beginning of this analysis we postulated that a text in order to be dated by means of intellectual history first and foremost needs to contain elements of intellectual history. Elements of intellectual history can be detected in the *Lunyu*. Terms, concepts, ideas and problems relate to discourses that can be found in other early texts as well. These are not consistent on the level of intell discourses within the *Lunyu* itself. The *Lunyu* does not present intellectual discourses that belong to a common thread of an argument or that relate to other identifiable discourses (outside of texts that contain a considerably high number of direct *Lunyu* quotations like the *Dizi wen* or the *Mengzi*). In this respect our model of Confucius sayings in the *Lunyu* as unrelated tesserae seems to describe the textual character of the *Lunyu* quite adequately. It is in line with Hunter's thesis who argues that "Confucius quotation before the advent of the *Analects* was a dynamic, creative practice in which authors treated Confucius sayings as venues for the re-performance of inherited wisdom."[122] It also accords to Csikzentmihalyi and Kim's conclusion.[123]

As the main intellectual focus of the book is not on the individual discourses but on a larger discourse on Confucius, however, this is where its contribution to intellectual history lies and where we can also find coherent views that run through the whole book. Consistent elements of intellectual discourse were only found on the level of Confucius portrayals which represent a continuous vivid and central discourse in Chinese intellectual history.

[122] Hunter 2012: i. Hunter concedes however, that although "Kongzi quotation practice in the early period was a decidedly, messy phenomenon" it was more than "a cipher who parroted whatever ideas an author wished to attribute to him. […] Kongzi yue sayings were […] not infinitely flexible. Close attention to the functions of Kongzi sayings reveals a handful of common threads and interests, which, taken together, illuminate their distinctive role within early intellectual discourse" (p. 120). Hunter identifies eight of such common threads (pp. 120-124).
[123] Csikzentmihalyi and Kim 2014.

Second, we claimed that for any dating these elements of intellectual discourses need to be identifiable on two levels: first, the continuous and identical part that makes it identifiable as an *element* X, second, the feature of change that makes it datable in a *history of* X. The first level could be identified in two problems that are discussed in many early Chinese texts, the problem of Confucius' knowledge and the problem of his success.

Yet, the construction of Confucius in the *Lunyu* is so unique among the early pre-Qin texts that it is not possible, at least on the basis of the two central themes that have been analyzed in this paper, to link it to any datable elements in other texts. We do find similar and overlapping representations of Confucius in two other texts, a skeptical Confucius expressing uncertainties and doubts in the *Gongyang zhuan* and a Master who fails in exterior aspects of his life such as official position and wealth but who has great accomplishments on the inner moral side, a Master who carefully weighs up whether and when to take office. But no development of these aspects can be found in other texts that would allow us to reconstruct a history of these aspects within which the *Lunyu* could be located. My attempts to use an intellectual history approach to date the *Lunyu* by analyzing the discursive fields of knowledge and success were thus not successful. This does not mean that a dating of the *Lunyu* by means of intellectual history is impossible in principle. It is not possible, I would argue, on the level of its internal intellectual discourses on individual terms and concepts such as *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *xiao* 孝 and others. It might be possible on the level of Confucius portrayals, but not, I am afraid, on the basis of the two central themes of knowledge and success that I have analyzed in this chapter.

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